ABILENE REFLECTOR

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THAT GENTLE BOSTON MAN.

An Idyl of Oregon.

'Two webfoot brothers loved a fair
Young lady, rich and good to see;
And oh, her black abundant hair!
And oh, her wondrous witchery!
Her father kept a cattle farm:
These brothers kept her safe from harm:

From harm of cattle on the hill:
From thick-necked bulls loud bellowing
The live-long morning, loud and shrill,
And lashing sides like any thing;
From roaring bulls that tossed the sand
And pawed the lilies from the land.

'There came a third young man. He came
From far and famous Boston town.
He was not handsome, was not game,
But he could cook "a goose" as brown
As any man that set foot on
The sunlit shores of Oregon.

'This Boston man he taught the school,
Taught gentleness and love alway;
Said love and kindness, as a rule,
Would ultimately make it pay.
He was so gentle, kind, that he
Could make a noun and verb agree.

So when one day the brothers grew
All jealous and did strip to fight,
He gently stood between the two
And meekly told them 'twas not right.
"'I have a higher, better plan,"
Outspake this gentle, Boston man.

"'My plan is this: Forget this fray
About that lily hand of hers:
Go take your guns and hunt all day
High up yon lofty hill of firs;
And while you hunt, my loving doves,
Why, I will learn which one she loves."

The brothers sat the windy h'll,
Their hair shone yellow, like spun gold;
Their rifles crossed their laps, but still
They sat and sighed, and shook with cold.
Their hearts lay bleeding far below;
Above them gleamed white peaks of snow.

Their hounds lay couching, slim and neat;
A spotted circle in the grass.
Their valley lay beneath their feet;
They heard the wide winged eagles pass;
The eagle cleft the clouds above,
Yet what could they but sigh and love?

"'If I could die," the elder sighed,
"My dear young brother here might wed."
"'Oh, would to Heaven I had died!"
The younger sighed, with bended head.
Then each looked each full in the face
And each sprang up and stood in place.

"'If I could die," the elder spake,
"Die by your hand, the world would say
'Twas accident; and for her sake,
Dear brother, be it so, I pray."
"'Not that!" the younger nobly said;
Then tossed his gun and turned his head;

And fifty paces back he paced.
And as he paced he drew the ball;
Then sudden stopped and wheeled and faced
His brother to the death and fall.
Two shots ran wild upon the air.
But, lo, the two stood harmless there.

The eagle poised high in the air;
Far, far below the bellowing
Of bullocks ceased, and everywhere
Vast silence sat all questioning.
The spotted hounds ran circling round,
Their red, wet noses to the ground.

And now each brother came to know
That each had drawn the deadly ball;
And for that fair girl far below
Had sought in vain to silent fall.
And then the two did gladly shake,
And thus the elder bravely spake:

"'Now let us run right hastily
And tell the kind schoolmaster all;
Yea, yea, and if she choose not me,
But all on you her favors fall,
This valiant scene, till all life ends,
Dear brother, binds us best of friends."

The hounds sped down a spotted line,
The bulls in tall, abundant grass,
Shook back their horns from bloom and vine
And trumpeted to see them pass:
They were so fair, they loved so true,
These brothers scarce knew what to do.

They sought the kind schoolmaster out
As swift as sweeps the light of morn;
They could but love, they could not doubt
This man so gentle, in a horn.
They cried: "Now, whose the lily hand,
That lady's of this webfoot land?"

They bowed before that big-nosed man,
That long-nosed man from Boston town;
They talked as only lovers can;
They talked, but he could only frown;
And still they talked, and still they plead;
It was as pleading with the dead.

At last this Boston man did speak:
"Her father has a thousand cows,
An hundred bulls, all fat and sleek:
He also had this ample house."
The brothers' eyes stuck out thereat
So far you might have hung your hat.

"'I liked the looks of this big house—
My lovely boys, won't you come in?
Her father has a thousand cows,
He also has a heap of tin.
The gurl? Oh yes, the gurl, you see,
The gurl just neow she married me."

—Joaquin Miller, in Pacific Rural Press.

THE PEASANT KING.

An Exchange Which Brought to Him a Life-Long Regret.

One day a certain King grew weary of the luxurious life he was leading, for, one by one, his every pleasure became monotonous, and at last he knew not what to do to make his life endurable.

So he concluded that a sure way out of the trouble would be to find out how other Kings had lived before him, and to ascertain what they did to gain happiness and peace of mind. Accordingly, he ordered a courtier to collect all the books concerning Kings, both in history and fiction, and to read them aloud to him, that he might collect useful information on the subject.

The courtier gathered a great number of these books and read them aloud to the King, who still seemed to be at a loss for information regarding the details of royal happiness. When the King had about given up in despair, the courtier came to an Eastern story of a ruler who had found happiness by changing places with a peasant.

"That will do," said the King to the courtier; "I have tried almost every other plan to be happy, but without success. I shall now try to find some peasant in my realm who would like to be King. In all my travels I have noticed how contented the peasants are. They seem to lack no requirement of earthly happiness; they are always singing, even at their work, and I would give any thing to be as happy as a peasant."

As the courtier attempted to go on with the story, the King held his hand up for him to stop.

"Close the book," said he; "I shall follow the example of the King in the story. There may be a peasant in my realm who thinks true happiness comes to those in power, and who could be induced to exchange his position in life for mine."

The courtier protested against such an experiment, until he thought the safety of his head was involved—and then desisted.

On the following day the King started out behind four white horses, in his best purple and golden crown, to exchange places with the happiest man he could find.

On an almost deserted road, he espied a little cabin under some large trees that almost screened it from view. As the carriage drew nearer, the King saw the occupant of the cabin digging in a patch. He seemed as happy as the birds that were singing on every limb; and he himself sung, while he pushed the spade into the ground and turned up the soft earth.

When the carriage stopped, the man dropped his spade, and came to the fence to see what was wanted.

The King stepped down and asked him some questions regarding the prospect of good crops in the country, and then said:

"I should be very well contented if I were as happy as you are."

"And I," replied the peasant, "should be very happy if I were a King."

"You are one," replied the King, as he threw his robes about the man's shoulders, and placed the golden crown upon his head. "That is your carriage, and these are your servants, who will bear witness that we have changed places, and that I am the peasant."

The joy of the new-made King knew no bounds. He sat up in the carriage, with all the dignity of an old King. In his heart he fancied that he must be dreaming, and pinched his arms, and asked his attendants to stick pins in him that he might be sure he was awake. He thought of his great power with absolute glee, and felt supremely happy in the knowledge that he could make the country go to war, and cut off the heads of people who in any way displeased him. What puzzled him most was the fact that he had ever been happy before, and he was at a loss to understand it.

"Whip up the horses," he said; "I wish to reach the place before sundown."

But, in reality, he feared that the old King might have changed his mind, and might be running along the road to overtake them.

When he reached the place, there was little excitement, as all the inmates knew they were to have a new King, having been informed of the nature of the old King's mission in the morning.

That night he made up his mind to have a grand banquet, such as a King should have. So he ate a most inordinate quantity of the richest dishes he could think of, and he did not stop until almost midnight, when he retired.

He was awakened several times before morning with nightmare, and passed so miserable a night, that he was tired and sleepy when it was time to rise for the day. While he was a peasant and worked hard year in and year out, he had never known any but nights of refreshing sleep.

But this did not trouble him much. He concluded that he would soon become accustomed to royal banquets, and that would be the end of sleepless nights. No sooner had he disposed of this trouble, than it occurred to him that he had heard that it was a common thing for Kings to have their food poisoned. Perhaps his food had been insufficiently poisoned the night before. In that case the servants would make sure to put enough in his coffee to kill him at breakfast.

This was a terrible reflection, and it harrowed the King's feelings in a way that they had never been harrowed before. But he went to his breakfast, determining that he would not touch the coffee. Then he concluded that they might deceive him by putting the poison where he would least suspect it.

When he was a peasant, he never knew such fear as this. He finished his breakfast in great alarm. His agitation had been so great that it gave him a worried, pale look.

"Is your Majesty well?" asked one of the courtiers.

"Why?" said the King.

"Your Majesty certainly looks very ill," replied the courtier.

Then the King was satisfied that he was poisoned. So he threw himself upon a lounge, clasped his hands to his forehead, declared he had been poisoned, and ordered all the servants to be beheaded if he should die.

Shortly after, he was satisfied that nothing serious was the matter, and he went out in the garden to take a breath of fresh air. He hadn't proceeded far, when he noticed some one following him. His follower was between him and the palace, and he could do nothing but depend upon himself in case of an attack. No matter where he walked, this man followed him, so he sat down to see if the straggler would venture nearer. But the man did not; he stood still and watched.

The King thought that he could never be attacked if he allowed his prospective assailant to know that he was watched. So he shouted for help, and in an instant a dozen servants were at his side.

"That man yonder is following me to kill me!" he cried, pointing at the man, who stood near.

"No, your Majesty, he is not," replied the spokesman of the servants. "He is the man who follows you as a guard, to prevent others from killing or molesting you."

"Is it then so common a thing for Kings to be killed in this way, that it is necessary to have a constant guard?"

His servants assured him that such was the case.

This disturbed his peace of mind to such an extent that he began immediately to question the absolute happiness of being a King.

When he returned to the palace there were hundreds of people waiting to see him on all kinds of business—people to have petitions signed, ministers with schemes of every description, so that the King's head spun, and he didn't have time to think.

After he had been a King two weeks, he was so completely undone, physically and mentally, that he regretted the day he had given up his hovel for a palace.

"Perhaps the old King," he thought, "is as tired of my lowly habitation as I am of his crown. I shall go and see if he will exchange places with me." So the King put on his finest robe and his crown, as the old King had previously done, and drove away in his grandest carriage.

As soon as the old King had placed his crown on the head of the peasant, and had seen him vanish in the distance, he went out where the peasant had been digging, and continued the work. After he had worked half an hour, all the rheumatic pains, of which he couldn't rid himself as a King, departed. And he sang as merrily as the birds in the trees, and felt happier every minute. At dinner he had such an appetite that he enjoyed every morsel in a way that he had never done during his entire reign.

That night he slept as he had never been able to sleep while burdened with the affairs of his country. He didn't toss about at all, and he did not wake up until the sun was high. Then he hurried down and had his breakfast while the birds hopped about the door or sung in the rose-bush by the window.

"I am as happy as a King is supposed to be," he cried, "and I should be happy to know that the present King, poor fellow, would ever be as contented as I am now."

And the old King worked on in perfect contentment for days, feeling safe from the conspiracies of enemies, and on the best of terms with his own conscience, so that he was indeed a happy man.

The garden was progressing finely; and the new occupant grew happier every day, and saw nothing but sunshine. This continual flow of happiness was never disturbed until one night when the King peasant had a terrible nightmare. He awoke fearfully agitated and in a cold perspiration—

He had dreamed that he was a King again!

He hastily arose and lighted a candle to take a look at the surroundings, to make sure that he was not in a palace and was not a King. He was afraid to go to sleep for fear the dream might be repeated.

That very day, when he was working and singing in the garden, he saw a great dust down the road; and in a few moments the carriage of the King stopped at the gate.

"How is the garden getting on?" said the new King.

"Splendidly."

"Would you not like to give me my hovel back in exchange for your palace and crown?"

"I could not think of it!" said the old King. "You must go to some one who has never been a King, if you want to make such an exchange. If you go on a little farther down the road you may find some man who would be glad to wear a crown."

So the new King drove down the road and asked the first laborer he met, if he would like to be a King.

"No," replied the laborer; "I was a King for a few days, and that was enough for me; I traded off my crown for this shovel and pickaxe, because the King who had given it to me for a small hut refused to trade back."

The King rode on; and much to his surprise, every man he met refused the unhappy Monarch's offer to make him a King, each one stating as his reason that he had already been a King for a greater or less period.

It seems that every man in the kingdom had worn the crown at one time or another, and that the King, who was trying to exchange places with the humblest being in the realm, was simply the last man in the land to get it.

Thus it was that the nation was filled with people who found the greatest happiness in the humblest spheres of life, and learned to be contented without nursing an ambition to be great or powerful.

The Peasant King had to rule all his life, for no one would exchange with him. And when he was bent and tottering with age, he would go to the bridge that commanded the main avenue of his domain, with an umbrella held over him to keep off the sun and rain, and persistently offer his crown to every passer-by. But no one would accept it!—*R. K. Munkittrick, in St. Nicholas.*

The Armies of Europe.

"The bloated armaments of the great military powers of Europe" display their proportions in a very striking manner in Colonel Vogt's work on "The European Armies of the Present." The mobilized strength of France is set down at 2,051,458 troops, exclusive of the territorial army, which is equally large; that of Russia at 1,922,405; Germany, 1,493,690, and Austria-Hungary, 1,055,955. The military strength of Italy has now attained proportions that would have been deemed incredible ten years ago. Including militia, it is alleged to amount to 2,387,332 men. If, however, a similar inclusion be made in the case of Russia, the military strength of that power will probably be found to exceed even that of the French Republic. Compared with these figures, the numerical proportions of the British Army ought almost to satisfy the members of the Peace Society. Including our militia and volunteers, as well as the Indian army, we can just muster 781,677 troops. And these have to serve for the defense of territory distributed over a very much wider area than that ruled by any of the other powers.—*Court Journal.*

—A little East Boston girl whose mother had entertained her the other day with the enumeration of table delicacies, particularly mentioned quail on toast as one of the most desirable of dishes, was surprised at the little one a day or two after, when the child, in response to the query as to what she would have for dinner, promptly replied: "Oh, mamma, I want some whale on toast!"—*Golden Days.*

—A man who sets out to study a woman's disposition can generally learn a great deal, but the price of tuition is apt to be high.